

Chapter

4 Folk and Popular Culture

KEY ISSUE 1

Where Are Folk and Popular Leisure Activities Distributed?

Rubenstein defines culture as the body of customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits that together constitute a group of people's distinct tradition. Culture can be distinguished from habit and custom. A **habit** is a repetitive act that an individual performs, and a **custom** is a repetitive act of a group. Culture combines three things—values, material artifacts, and political institutions. This chapter deals with the material artifacts of culture or **material culture**, which includes the **built environment** or visible objects that a group possesses and leaves behind for the future. It will focus on the two basic categories, folk and popular culture, their origins, diffusion, and spatial distribution. Popular culture has a more widespread distribution than folk culture, and its globalization causes problems that are addressed here.

Learning Outcome 4.1.1: Compare the origin, diffusion, and distribution of folk and popular culture.

Folk culture is more likely to have an anonymous origin and to diffuse slowly through migration, whereas popular culture is more likely to be invented and diffuse rapidly with the use of modern communications.

Learning Outcome 4.1.2: Compare the characteristics of folk and popular music.

Popular music has wide global distribution because of connections among artists and styles.

Learning Outcome 4.1.3: Describe how sports have been transformed from folk to popular culture.

Sports that originated as isolated folk customs have been organized into popular culture with global distribution.

Folk culture refers to the cultural practices of small, homogeneous groups living in traditional societies. Folk cultures are usually isolated and rural, with subsistence economies. Distinctive architecture and other material artifacts such as tools, musical instruments, and clothing contribute to the uniqueness of folk cultures. Nonmaterial aspects of folk culture include songs (**folk songs**), stories (**folklore**), and belief systems. Folk cultures originate in multiple **hearths** because of their isolation.

Popular culture on the other hand, refers to the cultural practices of large, heterogeneous societies that share many habits and characteristics. The elements of popular culture look similar in different places, and result in a relatively uniform landscape. Artifacts include music, food, entertainment, fashion, recreation, and various forms of art.

Folk culture diffuses slowly, on a small scale, usually through **relocation diffusion**. The Amish culture in the United States is a good example of the diffusion of a folk culture. Popular culture is easily diffused around the world, largely through **hierarchical diffusion**. The globalization of soccer is an example of the transformation and diffusion of an English folk culture to a popular culture.

Key Issues Revisited

4.1. Where Are Folk and Popular Leisure Activities Distributed?

- As a result of distinctive processes of origin and diffusion, folk and popular cultures have different distribution patterns
- Folk culture is more likely to have an anonymous origin and to diffuse slowly through migration
- Popular culture is more likely to be invented and diffused rapidly with the use of modern communications

KEY ISSUE 2

Where Are Folk and Popular Material Culture Distributed?

Learning Outcome 4.2.1: Compare reasons for distribution of clothing styles in folk and popular culture.

Folk clothing is more likely to respond to environmental conditions and cultural values, whereas clothing styles vary more in time than in place.

Learning Outcome 4.2.2: Understand reasons for folk food preferences and taboos.

Folk food culture is especially strongly embedded in environmental conditions.

Learning Outcome 4.2.3: Describe regional variations in popular food preferences.

Popular food culture can display some regional variations.

Learning Outcome 4.2.4: Understand factors that influence patterns of folk housing.

Folk housing styles, like other folk material culture, respond to environmental and cultural factors.

Learning Outcome 4.2.5: Understand variations in time and space of housing in the United States.

U.S. housing has roots in folk culture, but newer housing displays features of popular culture.

Many different groups who are living in relative isolation practice folk cultures. They are especially susceptible to the various ways in which the physical environment can limit their activities and diffusion, because of their low level of technology. Thus their cultural identity and landscapes will be very diverse. For example there are many different types of Himalayan art in a relatively small geographic area because of the harsh physical environment and limited interaction. Housing provides another good example of the diversity of folk culture that results from the interaction of cultural and physical geography. The resultant landscapes exemplify distinctive and unique senses of place.

Cultural traits such as food, clothing, and housing are influenced by physical geography. Folk cultural traits, such as housing (**folk housing** or **indigenous architecture**) are especially responsive to the environment because of their low level of technology and utilization of available resources. The sum of the effects of the local environment on a specific food item is called **terroir**. It is commonly used to describe the way in which soil, climate, and other physical features influence the character of distinctive wines. Restrictions on certain behaviors, like the consumption of particular foods, can also be imposed by social customs. This is called a **taboo**.

KEY ISSUE 3

Why Is Access to Folk and Popular Culture Unequal?

Learning Outcome 4.3.1: Describe the origin, diffusion, and distribution of TV around the world.

TV diffused during the twentieth century from the United States to Europe and then to developing countries.

Learning Outcome 4.3.2: Compare the diffusion of the Internet and social media with the diffusion of TV.

Diffusion of the Internet and of social media has followed the pattern of TV, but at a much faster rate.

Learning Outcome 4.3.3: Understand external and internal threats to folk culture posed by electronic media.

Folk culture may be threatened by the dominance of popular culture in the media and by decreasing ability to control people's access to the media.

Popular culture diffuses rapidly where high levels of technology allow people to acquire material possessions. The increasingly global world allows for the rapid diffusion and acceptance of the material and nonmaterial elements of popular culture. For example, as a result of the diffusion of popular culture, there are less regional differences in housing, clothing, and food in more developed countries. Television has played a major role in the diffusion of popular culture, especially since World War II. International rates of TV ownership have climbed rapidly in LDCs in the early twenty-first century, but there are still international differences in TV ownership.

In the last decade other electronic media have become important transmitters of popular culture. Internet service has diffused at a rapid pace, from 40 million Internet users worldwide in 1995 to 2.4 billion in 2012. Since their beginnings, Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube have also diffused rapidly, and what once was a phenomenon in the United States continues to diffuse rapidly.

KEY ISSUE 4

Why Do Folk and Popular Culture Face Sustainability Challenges?

Learning Outcome 4.4.1: Summarize challenges for folk culture from diffusion of popular culture.

Popular culture threatens traditional elements of cultural identity in folk culture.

Learning Outcome 4.4.2: Summarize the two principal ways that popular culture can adversely affect the environment.

Popular culture can deplete scarce resources and pollute the landscape.

Learning Outcome 4.4.3: Summarize major sources of waste and the extent to which each is recycled.

Paper is the principal source of solid waste before recycling, but plastics and food waste are the leading sources after recycling.

The traditional role of women in developing countries is changing as a result of the diffusion of popular culture. It is leading to the advancement of women through education and economic and social opportunities. However it may also lead to negative impacts such as sex crimes against women.

The diffusion of popular culture threatens the survival of folk culture. It is one example of **cultural imperialism**, causing people to lose their traditional ways of life in favor of the material elements of popular culture from more developed countries. For example the Western dominance of the television industry, especially the news media, threatens the independence of less developed countries. Three MDCs—the United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan—dominate the television industry in LDCs. The diffusion of information to newspapers around the world is dominated by the Associated Press (AP) and Reuters, which are owned by U.S. and British companies, respectively. In recent years the diffusion of small satellite dishes, especially in countries where the government attempts to control the media, has influenced political change.

The creation of uniform landscapes through the diffusion of popular culture can negatively impact the environment by depleting natural resources and polluting the landscape. Golf courses remake the environment as do some types of commercial agriculture, and the demand for some products puts a strain on natural resources. Popular cultures such as fast-food generate more waste and thus lead to the pollution of the environment.

AP Human Geography
Mr. Grenz
Folk & Popular Culture – Chapter 4
4.1-4.4 Review Questions

Name _____

Date _____ Period _____

Score _____/16
(1/2 pt. each)

1. How does Rubenstein define culture?
2. Define Habit:
3. Define Custom:
4. What THREE things does culture combine?
5. What is Folk Culture?
6. List THREE characteristics of folk cultures.
7. List THREE nonmaterial aspects of folk culture.
8. Why can folk cultures originate in multiple hearths?
9. What is Popular Culture?
10. List SIX popular culture artifacts.
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
 - 4.
 - 5.
 - 6.
11. How does folk culture diffuse? (what type?)
12. How is popular culture easily diffused around the world?

13. Review Question 4.1.1. All of the following are examples of folk music EXCEPT:
- A. songs that deal with agriculture
 - B. songs that deal with birth
 - C. songs that deal with death
 - D. songs that are made for the sole purpose of sales
 - E. songs that deal with harvests
14. Review Question 4.1.2. Folk culture is primarily spread through
- A. TV
 - B. Radio stations
 - C. The internet
 - D. Social Media
 - E. Relocation
15. How can the cultural identity and landscapes of isolated groups who practice folk cultures be very diverse?
16. What THREE cultural traits are influenced by physical geography?
17. Why are folk cultural traits (such as housing) especially responsive to the environment?
18. Define **Terroir**:
19. Define **Taboo**:
20. Review Question 4.2.1. Which item of clothing has been banned in some European countries?
- A. Blue jeans
 - B. Burqa
 - C. Poncho
 - D. Dashikini
 - E. Beret
21. Review Question 4.2.2. Where would you find a bostan?
- A. London
 - B. Sydney
 - C. Madrid
 - D. Istanbul
 - E. Tokyo
22. Where does popular culture diffuse rapidly?
23. Since World War II, what has played a major role in the diffusion of popular culture?

24. List THREE other electronic media that have become important transmitters of popular culture in the last decade:
25. Review Question 4.3.1. People in what country are most likely to watch the most TV?
- A. South Korea
 - B. England
 - C. Russia
 - D. Uruguay
 - E. United States
26. Review Question 4.3.2. According to the OpenNet Initiative, what content may governments block on the Internet?
- A. Political content
 - B. Sexual content
 - C. Security content
 - D. E-mail
 - E. All of the above
27. Why is the traditional role of women in developing countries changing? **EXPLAIN**
28. Explain **Cultural Imperialism**:
29. According to supporters of cultural imperialism:
- a. What THREE MDCs dominate the TV industry?
 - b. What TWO companies dominate the information given to newspapers?
30. In countries where the government attempts to control the media, what has influenced political change in recent years?
31. What effect can the creation of uniform landscapes through the diffusion of popular culture have?
32. Popular cultures such as _____ generate more waste and thus lead to pollution of the environment.

Review Question 4.4.1. Amish folk culture originated in

- A. Bern, Switzerland
- B. Berlin, Germany
- C. Brussels, Belgium
- D. Vienna, Austria
- E. Budapest, Hungary

Review Question 4.4.2. Which government has passed anti-dowry laws?

- A. Afghanistan
- B. India
- C. United States
- D. Pakistan
- E. Bhutan